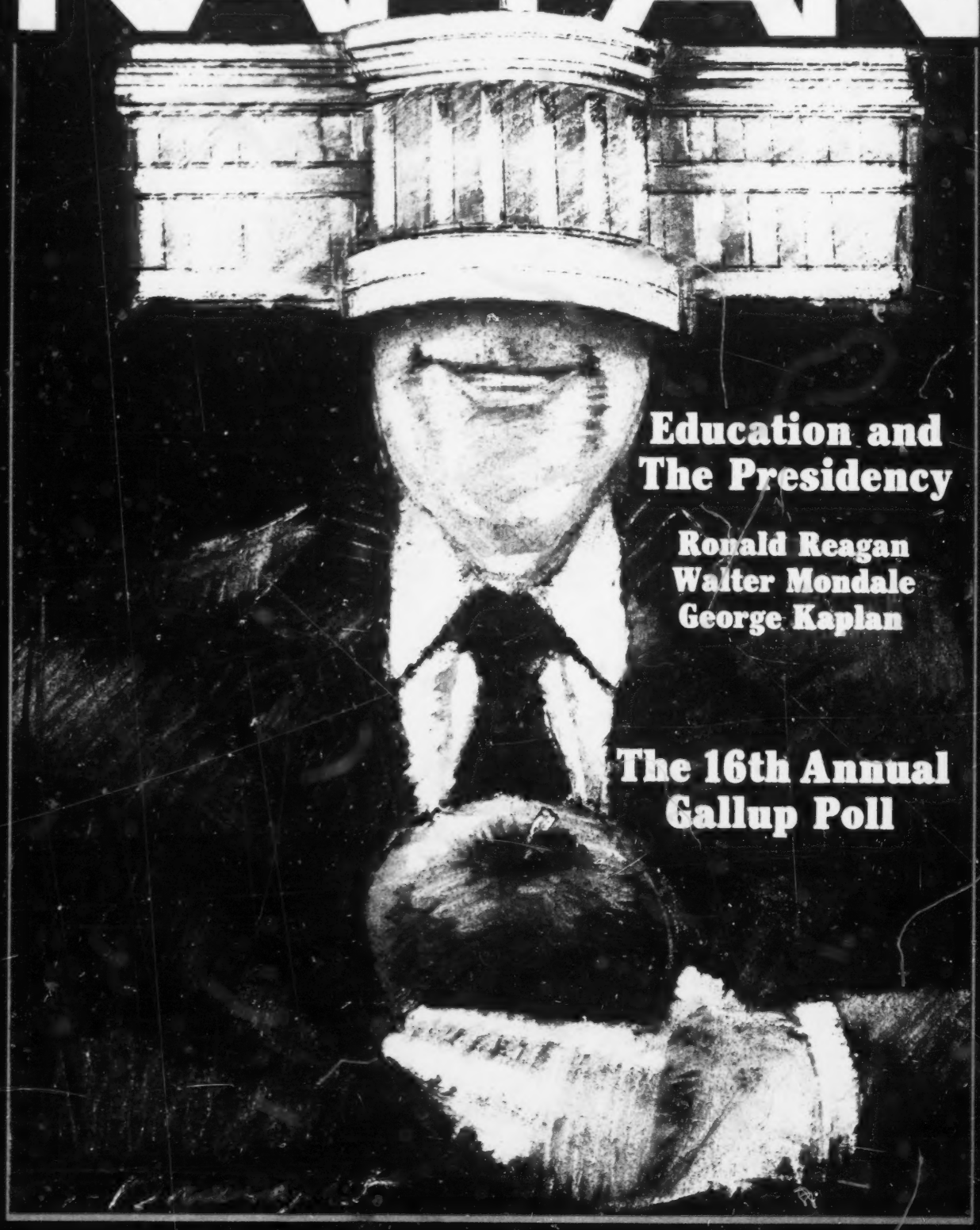
PHI DELTA

SEPTEMBER 1984

KAPPAN



Education and The Presidency

Ronald Reagan
Walter Mondale
George Kaplan

The 16th Annual Gallup Poll

Phi Delta September 1984 • Volume 66 • Number 1

KAPPAN

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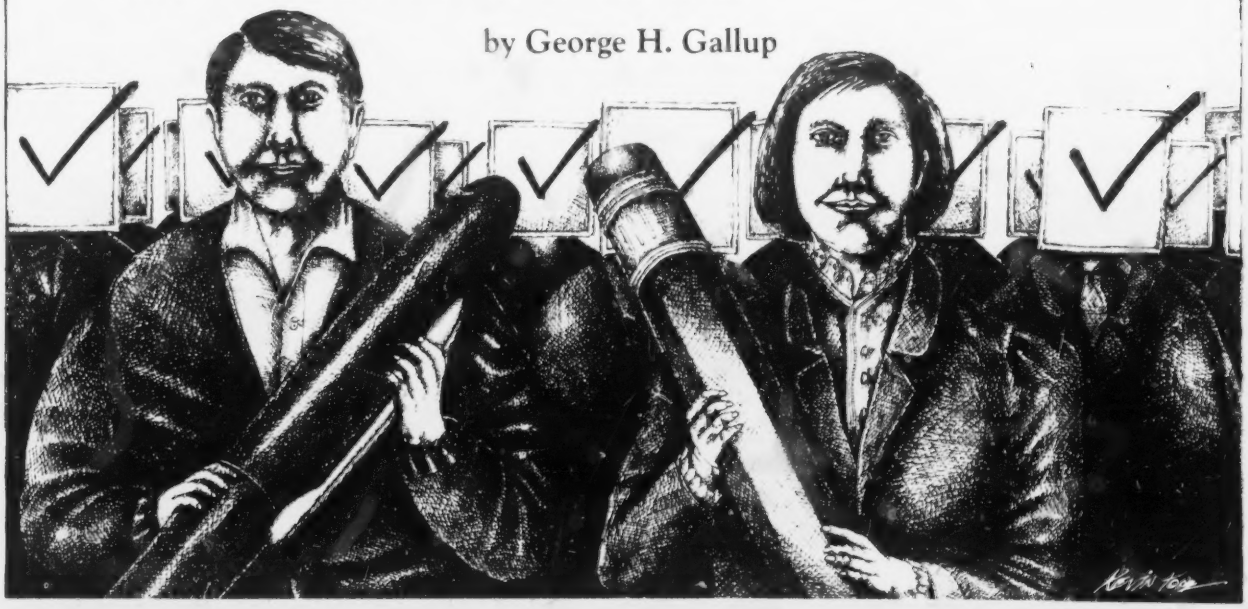
The 16th Annual Gallup Poll Of the Public's Attitudes Toward The Public Schools

by George H. Gallup



The annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, now financed by Phi Delta Kappa, is intended to be a continuing source of reliable information concerning trends in opinion about significant school questions. For school officials, the poll is valuable in at least two ways: it alerts decision makers to overall public reaction to a variety of school programs and policies, and it serves as a national benchmark against which local attitudes can be measured.

Local officials are welcome to use questions asked in the Gallup education surveys. The questions are not copyrighted. Moreover, no limits are placed on the use of information contained in these reports, beyond customary credit to the source and observance of the canons of accuracy and completeness of quotation.

Phi Delta Kappa's Dissemination Division, assisted by the Gallup Organization, is prepared to help school districts and other agencies survey local populations on education questions. For details of this service, called PACE (Polling Attitudes of the Community on Education), write or telephone Wilmer Bugher, associate executive secretary for administration, Phi Delta Kappa, P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402. The phone number is 812/339-1156.

Illustration by Kevin Pope

Nearly 100 Phi Delta Kappans and education writers offered suggestions for this year's poll. We wish to thank them for their cooperation. We are also grateful to the panel assembled by Phi Delta Kappa last January to discuss poll questions with George Gallup and members of his staff at the headquarters of the National School Boards Association in Washington, D.C. The panel was composed of Adrienne Bailey, vice president for academic affairs, College Board; Michael J. Bakalis, professor of education and public management, School of Education, Northwestern University; David Bednarek, education writer for the *Milwaukee Journal*; Ben Brodinsky, education consultant; Jerome G. Kopp, president of Phi Delta Kappa and principal of Downey High School in Modesto, California; Anne Lewis, executive editor, *Education USA*; Glen Robinson, executive director, Educational Research Service; Thomas Shannon, executive director, National School Boards Association; John Vasconcellos, chairman, Assembly Ways and Means Committee, State of California; and Gary Wittlich, professor of music, Indiana University. Representing the Phi Delta Kappa headquarters staff were Lowell Rose, executive secretary; Robert W. Cole, Jr., editor, *Phi Delta Kappan*; and myself. — *Stanley Elam*, coordinator, Gallup-Phi Delta Kappa Education Poll.

This issue is dedicated to the memory of George H. Gallup, creator of scientific polling and one of the most influential men of this century. Dr. Gallup, who died in Switzerland on July 27, was particularly fond of the Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools; it was his favorite project. We shall miss his guiding hand and his discerning intelligence and rare good humor. — The Editors

Purpose of the Study

THIS SURVEY, which measures the attitudes of Americans toward their public schools, is the 16th annual survey in this series. Funding for this survey was provided by Phi Delta Kappa, Inc. Each year the poll attempts to deal with issues of greatest concern both to educators and to the public. New as well as trend questions are included in this and every survey.

To insure that the survey would embrace the most important issues in the field of education, Phi Delta Kappa organized a meeting of various leaders in the field of education to discuss their ideas, evaluate proposed questions, and suggest new questions for the survey.

We wish to thank all those who contributed their ideas to this survey.

Research Procedure

The Sample. The sample used in this survey embraced a total of 1,515 adults (18 years of age and older). It is described as a modified probability sample of the United States. Personal, in-home interviewing was conducted in all areas of the U.S. and in all types of communities. A description of the sample can be obtained from Phi Delta Kappa.

Time of Interviewing. The fieldwork for this study was carried out during the period of 18-27 May 1984.

The Report. In the tables that follow, the heading "Nonpublic School Parents" includes parents of students who attend parochial schools and parents of students who attend private or independent schools.

Due allowance must be made for statistical variation, especially in the case of findings for small groups in which relatively few respondents were interviewed, e.g., nonpublic school parents.

The findings of this report apply only to the U.S. as a whole and not to individual communities. Local surveys, using the same questions, can be conducted to determine how local areas compare with national norms.

Summary of Findings

Americans are more favorably disposed toward the public schools today than at any time in the last decade. In this year's survey, more Americans (42%) grade their local schools A or B for their performance than at any time since 1976 — with an 11-point increase just since last year. Virtually the same dramatic increase occurs among the parents of public school children — with a 10% rise since last year in the percentage giving the local schools an A or B rating.

Americans have also become significantly more favorably disposed toward public school teachers and administrators. In 1981, 39% gave teachers a grade of A or B, whereas today the figure is 50%. Moreover, the A or B grades given to principals and administrators have risen from 36% to 47% during this same three-year period.

A final indicator that reveals an increase in favorable feelings toward the schools is the public's increased willingness to pay the price for public education. The percentage of Americans who say that they would be willing to pay more taxes for education has risen from 30% to 41%.

Americans continue to feel that public education contributes more to national strength than either industrial might or military power. More than eight in 10 say that developing the best educational system in the world will be "very important" in determining America's future strength, compared to 70% who favor developing the best industrial production system and only 45% who favor developing the strongest military force.

The American public is divided in its support for the various recommendations proposed in the recently published reports concerning U.S. education. The public strongly favors 1) increasing the amount of schoolwork and homework in both elementary and high school, 2) basing all grade promotions on examinations, and 3) employing nationally standardized tests for high school diplomas. Support for each of these proposals has increased in recent years.

Americans also support, by wide margins, the ideas of career ladders for teachers and state board teacher examinations in every subject. To a lesser degree, the public feels that salaries for teachers are too low; Americans support higher pay for teachers where shortages exist, including mathematics, science, technical subjects, vocational training, and other critical areas.

Americans give top priority to the traditional "basics" — math and English — as has been the case since these annual surveys were initiated; there is virtually unanimous agreement that these courses should be required of all high school students — both college-bound and non-college-bound. Several of the so-called "new basics" (i.e., science and computer science) are considered less important, though both have recorded gains since 1981, particularly computer science. Similarly, vocational training as a requirement for non-college-bound students has registered substantial gains. The issue of foreign language as a requirement for college-bound students, however, has made little progress in recent years. The number of Americans who feel that extracurricular activities are very important to a young person's education has dropped from 45% in 1978 to 31% today.

The public appears to be unwilling to make some of the necessary sacrifices or commitments to help implement some of the recommendations of the school reform reports. Americans are opposed to extended school years or longer school days, which would provide the time for additional schooling. (Support for both ideas has increased somewhat in the last few years, however.) Furthermore, nonparents as well as parents oppose by a 2-1 margin the tougher college admission

standards that are the logical extension of stricter standards at the elementary and high school levels.

Although teachers oppose merit pay as a means of rewarding outstanding teaching performance by a margin of roughly 2-1, the public (including parents and nonparents) *favors* the idea by about 3-1. Among the half of the population who are familiar with merit pay, support rises to roughly 4-1.

Approximately seven Americans in 10 favor school prayer — one of the most controversial issues facing the public schools today. At the same time, though the survey question omitted the word *voluntary*, a separate Gallup Poll measuring support for *voluntary* prayer shows some decline in support for the proposal.

Although Americans have tended to favor Ronald Reagan as President over Walter Mondale, they feel that Mondale would be more likely than Reagan — by 42% to 34% — to improve the quality of education. In addition, 66% of Americans say that they wou' .e more likely to vote for a candidate who favored increased federal spending for education; only 22% say that they would be less likely to vote for such a candidate.

The American public continues to regard discipline as the most important problem facing the public schools; about one-fourth of Americans cite discipline as the predominant problem, as they have done for more than a decade. Our analysis indicates that this is probably an outcome of the public's exaggerated perceptions of specific disciplinary problems that occur in the schools — especially when these findings are compared to the testimony of those most likely to know the actual situation, the teachers. Half of the American public feels that drugs are used in the local schools "most of the time" or "fairly often." About one-third of the public feels that theft of money or personal property, drinking of alcoholic beverages, theft of school property, and carrying of knives or other weapons occur "most of the time" or "fairly often."

MONITORING MEASURES

Education in America's Future

The American public is strongly in favor of developing the best educational system in the world. In fact, U.S. citizens believe — as they did in 1982, when this question was first asked — that education will be more important in determining America's place in the world 25 years from now than our industrial system or our military might.

The question:

In determining America's strength in the future — say, 25 years from now — how important do you feel each of the following factors will be — very important, fairly important, not too important, or not at all important?

	Very Important %	Fairly Important %	Not Too Important %	Not At All Important %	Don't Know %
Developing the best educational system in the world	82	13	2	1	2
Developing the most efficient industrial production system in the world	70	23	3	1	3
Building the strongest military force in the world	45	36	13	3	3

	Those responding very important	
	1984 %	1982 %
Developing the best educational system in the world	82	84
Developing the most efficient industrial production system in the world	70	66
Building the strongest military force in the world	45	47

1984 Rating of the Public Schools

The downward trend in the public's rating of the public schools recorded in these surveys during the last decade has ended. This year, 42% of those interviewed gave an A or B rating to the public schools in their communities, up sharply from 31% in 1983. Not since 1976 have these ratings been so high.

The higher rating given the schools this year may have resulted from two developments. First, the reports of the national commissions that have examined schooling in America have caused widespread debate concerning the quality of public education. Citizens have taken a closer look at their own schools and presumably found them better than they had previously believed. Also, many schools have heeded the criticisms made in the reports and have instituted reforms in their educational programs.

It is noteworthy that parents also give their schools a higher rating this year: 52% A or B, as opposed to 42% in 1983.

The question:

Students are often given the grades A,B,C,D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the *public* schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here — A,B,C,D, or FAIL?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A rating	10	8	15	4
B rating	32	31	37	33
C rating	35	35	32	42
D rating	11	10	12	16
FAIL	4	5	3	4
Don't know	8	11	1	1

Ratings Given The Local Public Schools	National Totals								
	1984 %	1983 %	1982 %	1981 %	1980 %	1979 %	1978 %	1977 %	1976 %
A rating	10	6	8	9	10	8	9	11	13
B rating	32	25	29	27	25	26	27	26	29
C rating	35	32	33	34	29	30	30	26	28
D rating	11	13	14	13	12	11	11	11	10
FAIL	4	7	5	7	6	7	8	5	6
Don't know	8	17	11	10	18	18	15	19	14

Further breakdowns:

	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	10	32	35	11	4	8
Sex						
Men	9	33	34	11	5	8
Women	10	32	36	11	3	8
Race						
White	10	33	34	11	4	8
Nonwhite	11	26	38	10	6	9
Age						
18 - 29 years	7	27	43	13	5	5
30 - 49 years	10	33	37	11	4	5
50 and over	11	35	27	9	5	13
Community Size						
1 million and over	9	29	37	12	5	8
500,000 - 999,999	5	34	37	16	3	5
50,000 - 499,999	9	29	34	14	6	8
2,500 - 49,999	8	43	31	6	3	9
Under 2,500	13	34	31	7	5	10
Central city	6	27	38	15	7	7
Education						
Grade school	14	27	29	8	6	17
High school	8	33	35	12	5	7
College	10	33	36	12	3	6
Region						
East	9	30	37	13	5	6
Midwest	13	37	30	8	4	8
South	8	35	33	10	5	9
West	9	25	40	14	4	8

Rating of Public Schools Nationally

This year's survey also shows an upward trend in the public's rating of the public schools nationally. But, as the ratings indicate, respondents continue to give schools in their own communities higher marks than they do the public schools nationally.

The question:

How about the public schools in the nation as a whole? What grade would you give the public schools nationally — A,B,C,D, or FAIL?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A rating	2	2	3	4
B rating	23	24	21	19
C rating	49	47	52	52
D rating	11	10	13	15
FAIL	4	4	2	4
Don't know	11	13	9	6

Public Schools in the Nation

	1984 %	1983 %	1982 %	1981 %
A rating	2	2	2	2
B rating	23	17	20	18
C rating	49	38	44	43
D rating	11	16	15	15
FAIL	4	6	4	6
Don't know	11	21	15	16

Rating of Teachers in the Local Public Schools

The 1984 survey indicates that the public has increasing respect for the teachers in the local schools. Half of all respondents give teachers an A or B rating. This is considerably higher than the rating given to teachers in the 1981 survey.

The highest ratings go to teachers in small communities — those with a population under 2,500. The lowest ratings go to teachers in the central cities, where the teaching problems are greatest.

Respondents living in the Midwest give their teachers a slightly higher rating than do citizens living in other areas of the U.S.

The question:

Now, what grade would you give the teachers in the public schools in this community?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A rating	13	13	15	6
B rating	37	35	43	34
C rating	31	31	29	42
D rating	7	6	8	9
FAIL	3	3	3	1
Don't know	9	12	2	8

	1984 %	1981 %
NATIONAL TOTALS		
A rating	13	11
B rating	37	28
C rating	31	31
D rating	7	9
FAIL	3	6
Don't know	9	15

Further breakdowns:

	A %	B %	C %	D %	FAIL %	Don't Know %
NATIONAL TOTALS	13	37	31	7	3	9
Sex						
Men	12	38	31	7	3	9
Women	14	37	31	6	3	9
Race						
White	13	38	30	7	3	9
Nonwhite	13	33	33	6	3	12
Age						
18 - 29 years	11	33	38	7	4	7
30 - 49 years	13	39	32	8	2	6
50 and over	15	39	24	6	2	14
Community Size						
1 million and over	12	35	35	6	3	9
500,000 - 999,999	17	38	25	10	2	8
50,000 - 499,999	9	37	33	8	2	11
2,500 - 49,999	15	39	27	5	4	10
Under 2,500	17	41	19	5	5	13
Central city	9	34	36	9	3	9
Education						
Grade school	13	36	21	7	4	19
High school	13	34	34	7	4	8
College	13	42	29	7	1	8
Region						
East	11	40	31	6	5	7
Midwest	16	41	27	5	2	9
South	13	34	33	8	2	10
West	11	34	33	8	3	11

Rating of Principals and Administrators In the Local Public Schools

The ratings given to school principals and other administrators are somewhat similar to those given to teachers. As in the case of teachers, the ratings in the 1984 survey are appreciably higher than those in the 1981 survey.

The question:

Now, what grade would you give the principals and administrators in the local public schools in this community?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A rating	13	12	18	5
B rating	34	32	36	42
C rating	29	30	27	27
D rating	8	7	10	13
FAIL	5	5	5	6
Don't know	11	14	4	7

NATIONAL TOTALS	1984 %	1981 %
A rating	13	10
B rating	34	26
C rating	29	28
D rating	8	12
FAIL	5	9
Don't know	11	15

Rating of the School Board In This Community

This year's survey, for the first time, rates school boards on the same scale as that employed to rate the schools, teachers, administrators, and parents.

Understandably, those who have little contact with the public schools say that they do not know enough about their local school boards to assign a rating. Parents with children now enrolled in either public or nonpublic schools rate school boards only slightly lower than they rate the schools themselves. The highest rating is given by respondents who have children now enrolled in the public schools.

The question:

Now, what grade would you give the school board in this community?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A rating	9	9	11	5
B rating	32	31	33	33
C rating	29	27	29	39
D rating	11	10	14	14
FAIL	6	6	8	5
Don't know	13	17	5	4

Rating Given to Parents of Students In the Public Schools

Parents of children now attending the public schools are not too pleased with the way public school parents are bringing up their children. In fact, they give themselves, collectively, lower marks for the way they are doing their job than they give teachers and school administrators.

Only 39% give parents a grade of A or B. This contrasts with a figure of 58% for teachers and 54% for principals and other school administrators.

Parents with children attending nonpublic schools give parents of public school students even lower grades. Only 29% give public school parents an A or B rating; 26% give them a D or FAIL rating.

The question:

Now, what grade would you give the parents of students in the local public schools for bringing up their children?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
A rating	7	6	9	6
B rating	26	25	30	23
C rating	36	36	35	40
D rating	16	15	19	16
FAIL	6	6	5	10
Don't know	9	12	2	5

NATIONAL TOTALS	1984 %	1981* %
A rating	7	5
B rating	26	24
C rating	36	36
D rating	16	16
FAIL	6	11
Don't know	9	8

*The wording of the question in the 1981 survey was: "What grade would you give parents in this community for the job they are doing in raising their children to be self-disciplined and responsible young people — A,B,C,D, or FAIL?"

Tax Increases to Support The Public Schools

Since the spring of 1983, when the National Commission on Excellence in Education presented its report, a slight increase has been registered in the percentage of citizens who favor a tax increase in situations where the schools say that they need much more money.

The percentage of public school parents who favor such a tax increase has risen from 48% in 1983 to 54% today, while the percentage of those opposed has dropped from 45% to 38%.

Those respondents who have attended college are most in favor of tax increases. When sections of the U.S. are compared, residents of the western states are found to be most in favor of raising taxes to help the schools.

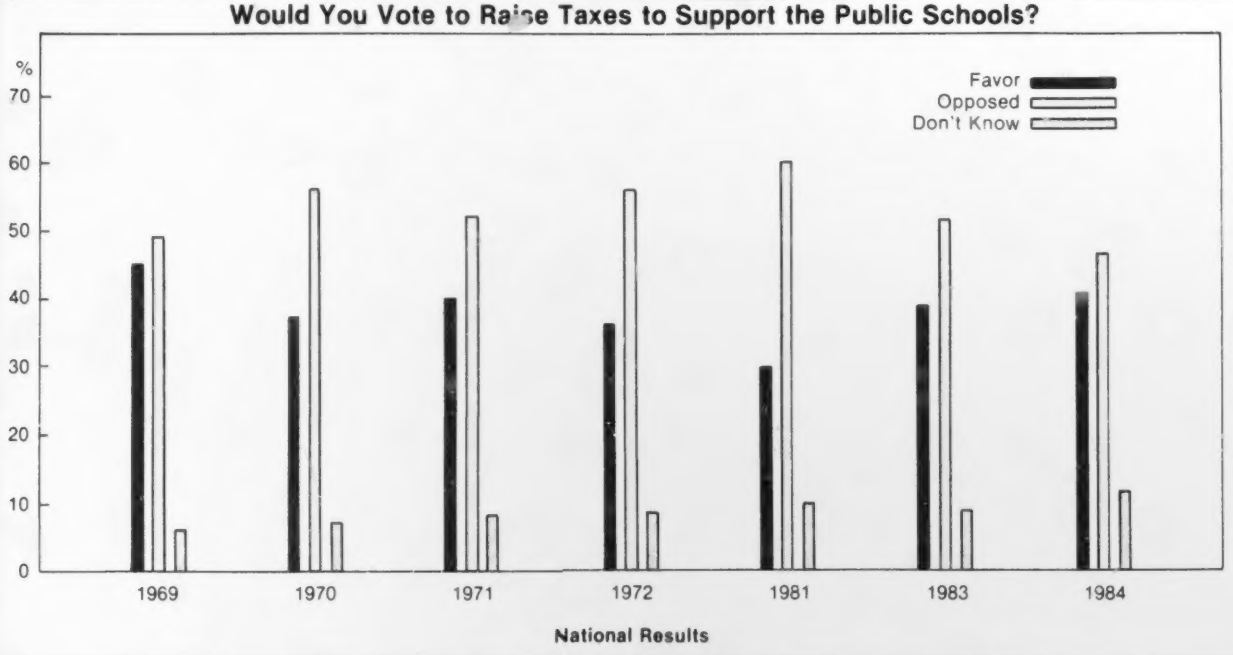
The question:

Suppose the local public schools said they needed much more money. As you feel at this time, would you vote to raise taxes for this purpose, or would you vote against raising taxes for this purpose?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
For raise in taxes	41	37	54	42
Against raise in taxes	47	50	38	51
Don't know	12	13	8	7

Financial Support of the Public Schools

NATIONAL TOTALS	Favor Raising Taxes %	Opposed to Raising Taxes %	Don't Know %
1984 survey	41	47	12
1983 survey	39	52	9
1981 survey	30	60	10



Financial Support of the Public Schools

NATIONAL TOTALS	Favor Raising Taxes %	Opposed to Raising Taxes %	Don't Know %
1972 survey	36	56	8
1971 survey	40	52	8
1970 survey	37	56	7
1969 survey	45	49	6

CURRENT EDUCATION ISSUES

Presidential Candidate Perceived to Support Education More

At the time interviewing was conducted for this survey, Ronald Reagan held a wide lead in a Presidential trial heat against Walter Mondale (54% to 39%).

Despite this apparent preference for President Reagan, when the public was asked which candidate, Reagan or Mondale, would be more likely to improve the quality of education in the U.S., Mondale was named by a larger percentage than the President — 42% to 34%. Nearly a quarter of the public registered no opinion.

The question:

Which Presidential candidate do you feel would be more likely, as President, to improve the quality of public education in the U.S. — Ronald Reagan or Walter Mondale?

	National Totals %
Walter Mondale	42
Ronald Reagan	34
No opinion	24

Likelihood of Voting for Candidate Supporting Increased Spending for Education

Another measure of the public's willingness to spend more on education is elicited by a question asking whether respondents would be more likely to vote for a Presidential candidate who favored increased spending for education or less likely to vote for such a candidate.

Two-thirds of Americans (66%) would be more likely to vote for the candidate supporting increased spending. Only a third as many (22%) say that they would be less likely to vote for this candidate.

The question:

Would you be more likely or less likely to vote for a candidate who says he would increase federal spending for education?

	National Totals %
More likely	66
Less likely	22
Don't know	12

Increasing the Length of The School Year

Public sentiment in favor of increasing the length of the school year by one month is growing. In the 1982 survey a total of 37% approved of this plan. In 1983 approval reached 40%, and in the present survey the comparable figure is 44%. However, 50% in this year's survey still oppose this plan.

Those who are most in favor of a longer school year are residents of the cities with populations over one million. Most opposed are people living in smaller cities and in towns of 2,500 and under.

Those who have attended college favor a longer school year by a margin of 51% to 45%. Residents of the western states also approve a longer school year by a margin of 59% to 35%.

The question:

In some nations, students attend school as many as 240 days a year as compared to 180 days in the U.S. How do you feel about extending the

Charts by Charmaine Depena

public school year in this community by 30 days, making the school year about 210 days or 10 months long? Do you favor or oppose this idea?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	44	44	45	46
Oppose	50	49	52	46
No opinion	6	7	3	8

NATIONAL TOTALS	1984 %	1983 %	1982 %
Favor	44	40	37
Oppose	50	49	53
No opinion	6	11	10

Further breakdowns:

	Favor %	Oppose %	No Opinion %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**44**	**50**	**6**
Sex			
Men	45	49	6
Women	42	51	7
Race			
White	44	50	6
Nonwhite	46	48	6
Age			
18 - 29 years	38	58	4
30 - 49 years	47	48	5
50 and over	45	46	9
Community Size			
1 million and over	52	42	6
500,000 - 999,999	48	49	3
50,000 - 499,999	42	50	8
2,500 - 49,999	39	56	5
Under 2,500	41	54	5
Central city	52	42	6
Education			
Grade school	34	53	13
High school	41	53	6
College	51	45	4
Region			
East	45	49	6
Midwest	37	55	8
South	39	55	6
West	59	35	6

Extending the School Day by One Hour

Although this year's survey findings indicate that the public is slightly more in favor of increasing the length of the school day by one hour than in 1982, a majority remain opposed.

Residents of the western states and the largest cities most strongly favor the longer school day. Residents of the Midwest are the most opposed.

The question:

How do you feel about extending the school day in the schools in this community by one hour? Do you favor or oppose this idea?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	42	42	41	38
Oppose	52	51	56	58
No opinion	6	7	3	4

NATIONAL TOTALS	1984 %	1983 %	1982 %
Favor	42	41	37
Oppose	52	48	55
No opinion	6	11	8

Further breakdowns:

	Favor %	Oppose %	No Opinion %
NATIONAL TOTALS	**42**	**52**	**6**
Sex			
Men	42	52	6
Women	41	53	6
Race			
White	42	53	5
Nonwhite	40	52	8
Age			
18 - 29 years	32	65	3
30 - 49 years	43	52	5
50 and over	48	44	8
Community Size			
1 million and over	49	45	6
500,000 - 999,999	34	59	7
50,000 - 499,999	37	57	6
2,500 - 49,999	39	55	6
Under 2,500	46	48	6
Central city	45	48	7
Education			
Grade school	42	44	14
High school	40	55	5
College	45	51	4
Region			
East	46	49	5
Midwest	34	60	6
South	37	57	6
West	53	42	5

Amount of Schoolwork Required of Elementary and High School Students

All segments of the U.S. population agree that students in elementary schools and high schools are not made to work hard enough in school or on homework. This opinion has remained fairly constant in three surveys, the first in 1975.

Only 5% of those interviewed in this year's survey think that students are made to work too hard in elementary school, and only 4% think students in high school are made to work too hard. By contrast, 59% say that students are not required to work hard enough in elementary school, and 67% say that they are not required to work hard enough in high school.

Perhaps the best judges of whether students are being given enough schoolwork to do in school and at home are the parents of these students. Parents agree that their children are not being required to work hard enough. Only 7% of parents with children now enrolled in the public schools say that children in elementary school are required to work too hard; 54% say that they are not required to work hard enough. In the case of high school students, 5% of parents with children enrolled in public schools say that children are required to work too hard; 62% say that they are not required to work hard enough.

The question:

In general, do you think *elementary* schoolchildren in the public schools here are made to work too hard in school and on homework or not hard enough?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Too hard	5	5	7	4
Not hard enough	59	60	54	56
About right amount	24	20	34	30
Don't know	12	15	5	10

NATIONAL TOTALS	1984 %	1983 %	1975 %
Too hard	5	4	5
Not hard enough	59	61	49
About right amount	24	19	28
Don't know	12	16	18

The question:

What about students in the public *high schools* here — in general, are they required to work too hard or not hard enough?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Too hard	4	4	5	-
Not hard enough	67	69	62	69
About right amount	18	15	25	22
Don't know	11	12	8	9

NATIONAL TOTALS	1984 %	1983 %	1975 %
Too hard	4	3	3
Not hard enough	67	65	54
About right amount	18	12	22
Don't know	11	20	21

Subjects the Public Would Require

Mathematics and English head the list of subjects the public would require of high school students who plan to attend college; mathematics was mentioned by 96% of respondents, and English was mentioned by 94%.

In addition, a large majority would require history/U.S. government and science. Slightly fewer, but still a majority, would require courses in business, foreign language, and health education.

For *non*-college-bound students, the public would also require math and English and by virtually the same percentages as for those planning to go to college. Somewhat fewer respondents feel that history and science should be required of non-college-bound students, and far fewer favor a foreign language requirement.

Not surprisingly, a much larger percentage of Americans feel that vocational training should be required for non-college-bound students than for those planning to go to college. Similarly, business as a required course is favored by a slightly larger percentage for non-college-bound students.

Support for computer science as a required course — for both college- and non-college-bound students — has dramatically increased from 43% to 68% in just three years. Although support for a science requirement for non-college-bound students has risen only marginally, support for a science requirement for those planning to go to college has risen from 76% to 84% since 1981. On the other hand, support for a foreign language for college-bound students has made little progress in the past three years.

The questions:

Would you look over this card, which lists high school subjects. If you were the one to decide, what subjects would you require every public high school student who *plans to go on to college* to take?

What about those public high school students who do *not plan to go to college* when they graduate? Which courses would you require them to take?

	Should Be Required: For Those Planning To Go to College %	Should Be Required: For Those Not Planning to Go To College %
Mathematics	96	92
English	94	90
History/U.S. government	84	71
Science	84	61
Business	68	76
Foreign language	57	19
Health education	52	50
Physical education	43	44
Vocational training	37	83
Art	24	18
Music	22	18

	Should Be Required: For Those Planning To Go to College			Should Be Required: For Those Not Planning to Go To College		
	1984 %	1983 %	1981 %	1984 %	1983 %	1981 %
Mathematics	96	92	94	92	87	91
English	94	88	91	90	83	89
History/U.S. government	84	78	83	71	63	71
Science	84	76	76	61	53	58
Business	68	55	60	76	65	75
Foreign language	57	50	54	19	19	21
Health education	52	43	47	50	42	46
Physical education	43	41	44	44	40	43
Vocational training	37	32	34	83	74	64
Art	24	19	28	18	16	20
Music	22	18	26	18	16	20

Special Areas of Instruction That Should Be Required

The public would like the public schools to provide instruction in many aspects of modern life, in addition to the subjects traditionally included in the school curriculum. Heading the list of these special areas of instruction is drug abuse, followed by alcohol abuse. Large majorities of the population would also require instruction in such areas as driver education, computer training, race relations, and the dangers of nuclear waste.

The question:

In addition to regular courses, high schools offer instruction in other areas. As I read off these areas, one at a time, would you tell me whether you feel this instruction should be required or should not be required for all high school students.

	Should Be Required %	Should Not Be Required %	No Opinion %
Drug abuse	82	15	3
Alcohol abuse	79	18	3

	Should Be Required	Should Not Be Required	No Opinion
	%	%	%
Driver education	73	25	2
Computer training	68	28	4
Race relations	65	29	6
Dangers of nuclear waste	61	34	5
Communism/socialism	57	37	6
Parenting/parent training	55	39	6
Dangers of nuclear war	51	43	6

	Should Be Required		
	1984	1983	1981
	%	%	%
Drug abuse	82	81	82
Alcohol abuse	79	76	78
Driver education	73	72	71
Computer training	68	72	43
Race relations*	65	56	-
Dangers of nuclear waste*	61	56	-
Communism/socialism*	57	51	-
Parenting/parent training	55	58	64
Dangers of nuclear war*	51	46	-

*These topics were not included in the 1981 survey.

Importance of Extracurricular Activities

About three-quarters of the U.S. public (77%) feel that extracurricular activities are either "very important" or "fairly important" to a young person's education. At the same time, however, there has been a decline in the percentage of those who say that extracurricular activities are "very important" — from 45% in 1978 to 31% in 1984. During this same period there has been an increase in the percentage of the public who say that extracurricular activities are "not too important" — from 9% to 18%. This decrease in support may reflect, to some extent, the heavy emphasis placed on the academic curriculum by the various national reports on the state of education.

Better-educated Americans are more inclined to feel that extracurricular activities are important. A total of 84% of those who have attended college say that these activities are "very important" or "fairly important," while only 68% of those whose education ended with grade school regard such activities as important.

The question:

I'd like your opinion about extracurricular activities such as the school band, dramatics, sports, and the school paper. How important are these to a young person's education -- very important, fairly important, not too important, or not at all important?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Very important	31	31	32	30
Fairly important	46	45	48	52
Not too important	18	18	16	14
Not at all important	4	4	3	3
No opinion	1	2	1	1

	1984	1978
NATIONAL TOTALS	%	%
Very important	31	45
Fairly important	46	40
Not too important	18	9
Not at all important	4	4
No opinion	1	2

National Test for Graduation

The American public shows remarkable unanimity in favoring a standard nationwide test for graduation from high school. Only in communities under 2,500 is sentiment fairly closely divided on this proposal.

This question was first asked of a national cross section of adults in 1958, and the idea was favored at that time by a margin of 50% to 39%. When the same question was asked in 1981, 69% favored the proposal, 26% opposed it, and 5% had no opinion. Roughly the same results were found in this year's survey: 65% in favor, 29% opposed, and 6% with no opinion.

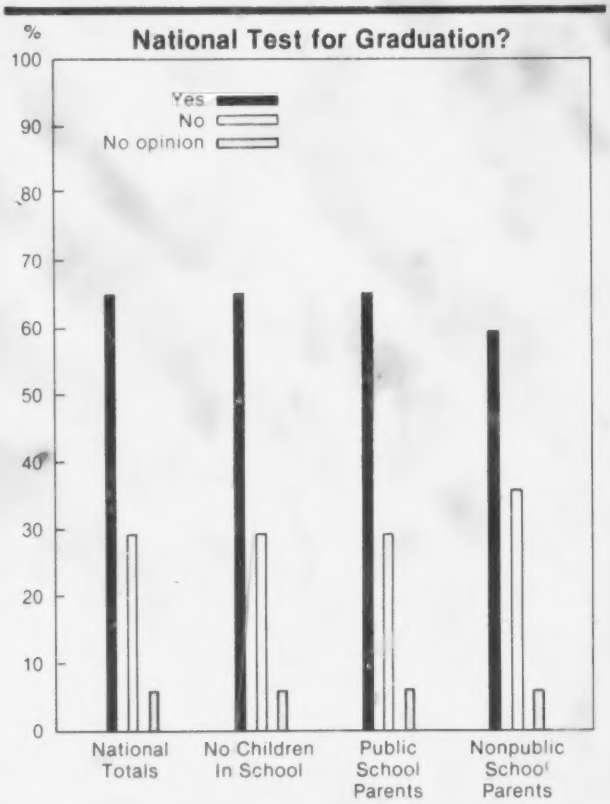
Many nations require students to pass standard examinations for graduation; in the United States, however, because of varying local conditions, such a plan has never been adopted. Nevertheless, the public appears to see merit in such a policy.

The question:

Should all high school students in the United States be required to pass a standard nationwide examination in order to get a high school diploma?

	National Totals	No Children In School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes	65	65	65	59
No	29	29	29	35
No opinion	6	6	6	6

	1984	1981	1976	1958
NATIONAL TOTALS	%	%	%	%
Yes	65	69	65	50
No	29	26	31	39
No opinion	6	5	4	11



Raising College Entrance Requirements

Many educators have argued that raising the entrance requirements of colleges and universities would be an effective way of inducing the public schools to raise their standards. However, this proposal fails to win the approval of the public.

Analysis of the opinions of various groups in the popuiation reveals that all major groups oppose this suggestion, especially those most concerned: parents of children now attending elementary or high school. Even those who have attended college vote against the idea.

The question:

Do you feel that four-year colleges and universities should raise their entrance requirements or not?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes	27	28	24	21
No	59	57	64	61
No opinion	14	15	12	18

State Board Examinations for Teachers

Survey findings reveal widespread agreement that prospective teachers should be required to pass state board examinations to prove their knowledge in the subjects they plan to teach.

More than eight in every 10 respondents have favored this policy in the three surveys in which this same question has been asked: 1979, 1981, and 1984.

The question:

In addition to meeting college requirements for a teacher's certificate, should those who want to become teachers also be required to pass a state board examination to prove their knowledge in the subjects they will teach before they are hired?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes	89	89	89	92
No	7	7	8	7
No opinion	4	4	3	1

NATIONAL TOTALS	1984 %	1981 %	1979 %
Yes	89	84	85
No	7	11	9
No opinion	4	5	6

Career Ladder for Teachers

The proposal to adopt a career ladder for public school teachers that is grounded in classroom effectiveness, with accompanying salary increases, is favored by a substantial majority (75%) of the public. In fact, by approximately the same percentages, all segments of the population agree that this is a good plan.

The question:

It has been suggested that public schools adopt a career ladder for teachers, based primarily upon demonstrated effectiveness in the classroom, with salaries increasing accordingly. Would you approve or disapprove if such a plan were adopted by the public schools in this community?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Approve	75	74	77	79
Disapprove	16	16	16	16
No opinion	9	10	7	5

Teachers' Salaries in This Community

The American public tends to feel that teachers' salaries are too low. Interestingly, this view is held by those who do not have children enrolled in the public schools, as well as by those who do.

On the other hand, those who have no children in the local schools are more likely to vote against tax increases and bond issues for the schools than those who have children enrolled.

During the last 15 years, attitudes concerning teachers' salaries have shown little change. The weight of opinion throughout this period has been that salaries are too low. This opinion is particularly prevalent among more highly educated citizens and among those who live in the southern states, where teacher salaries tend to be lowest.

The question:

Do you think salaries in this community for teachers are too high, too low, or just about right?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Too high	7	6	8	7
Too low	37	37	38	33
Just about right	41	40	41	47
No opinion	15	17	13	13

NATIONAL TOTALS	1984 %	1983 %	1981 %	1969 %
Too high	7	8	10	2
Too low	37	35	29	33
About right	41	31	41	43
No opinion	15	26	20	22

NATIONAL TOTALS (with "no opinion" group eliminated)	1984 %	1983 %	1981 %	1969 %
Too high	8	11	13	3
Too low	44	47	36	42
About right	48	42	51	55

Paying Math and Science Teachers More

Slightly more respondents in this year's survey favor than oppose paying higher wages to teachers of science, math, and technical and vocational subjects because of the shortage that now exists in these subject areas. However, only in the largest cities does the percentage reach 50% or higher.

When the same question was asked in 1983, national totals were 50% in favor, 35% opposed, and 15% don't know.

The question:

Today there is a shortage of teachers in science, math, technical subjects, and vocational subjects. If your local schools needed teachers in these subjects, would you favor or oppose paying them higher wages than teachers of other subjects?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	48	46	52	56
Oppose	43	43	42	37
No opinion	9	11	6	7

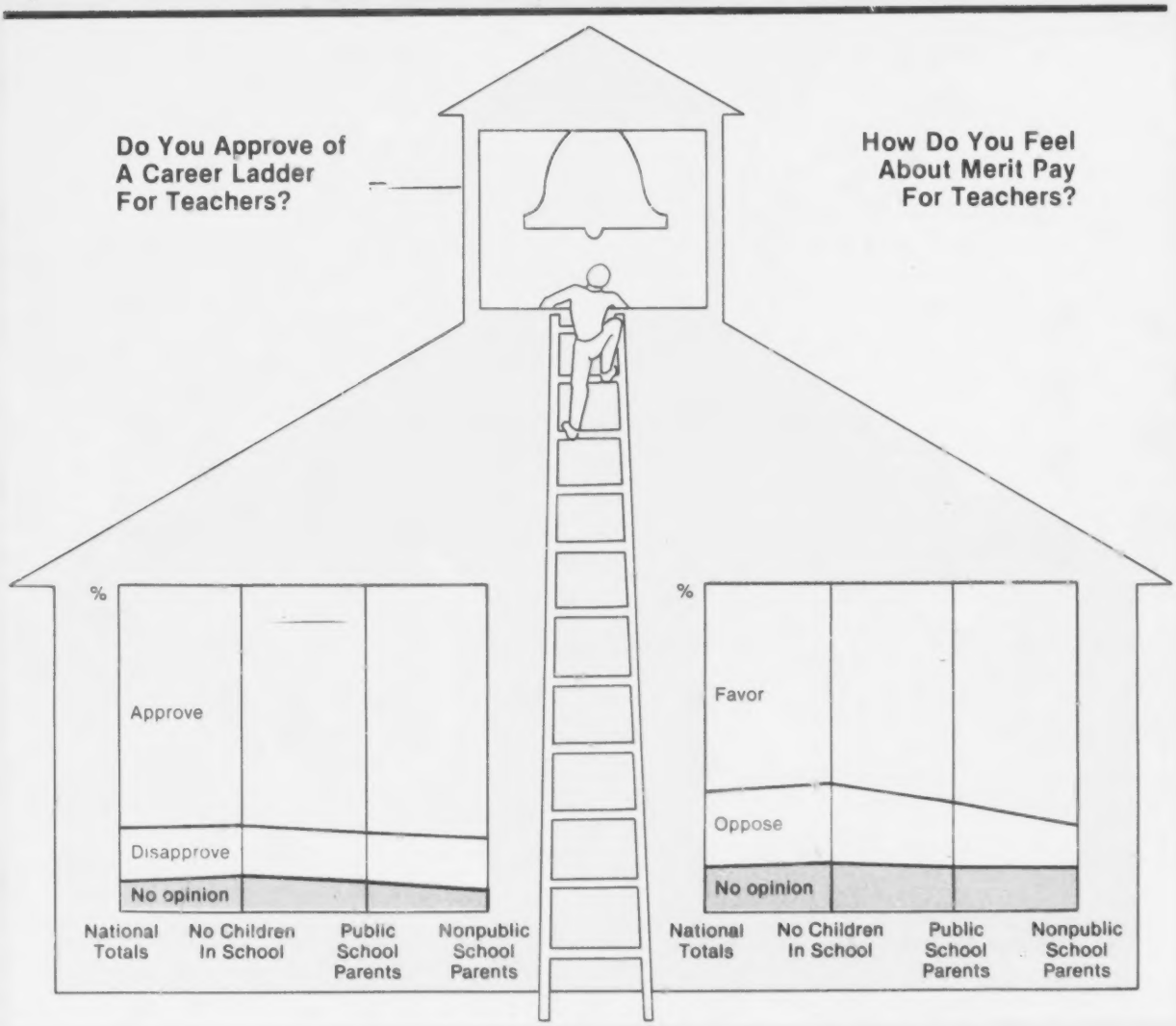
NATIONAL TOTALS	1984 %	1981 %
Favor	48	50
Oppose	43	35
No opinion	9	15

Attitudes Toward Merit Pay Programs

Although the issue of merit pay for teachers seems to have provoked a great deal of discussion recently, when this survey was conducted only half of those interviewed said that they had heard or read anything about such programs.

When those who said that they were aware of merit pay proposals were asked whether they generally favored or opposed the idea, three-fourths (76%) said that they approved of it, 19% were opposed, and 5% had no opinion. For the total sample, the percentage who approve of the idea of merit pay is 65%, with 22% opposed and 13% having no opinion.

In 1970 and again in 1983 a merit pay question was asked in this form: "Should each teacher be paid on the basis of the quality of his or her work, or should all teachers be paid on a standard-scale basis?" In 1970, 58% said that teachers should be paid according to "quality of work," 36% on a "standard scale," and 6% said "don't know." Comparable figures for 1983 were 61%, 31%, and 8%.



The question:

Some states have recently adopted merit pay programs which would provide additional pay for outstanding teacher performance. Have you heard or read anything about these programs?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes	51	50	55	56
No	45	46	42	42
Don't know	4	4	3	2

The question:

How do you, yourself, feel about the idea of merit pay for teachers? In general, do you favor or oppose it?

Total Sample	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	65	63	69	75
Oppose	22	23	20	14
No opinion	13	14	11	11
Those Who Have Heard or Read About Merit Pay for Teachers	**National Totals %**	**No Children In School %**	**Public School Parents %**	**Nonpublic School Parents %**
Favor	76	75	77	81
Oppose	19	20	19	10
No opinion	5	5	4	9

Criteria to Be Used in Awarding Merit Pay

One of the greatest hurdles facing merit pay is the difficulty of agreeing on the criteria to be used in deciding which teachers should receive extra pay. A list of possible criteria was compiled. To determine which criteria are most acceptable to the public, respondents were asked in the case of each criterion whether they thought it should or should not be used to decide which teachers should be given additional pay.

Seven criteria are listed below in order of their acceptability to the public. Improvement achieved by students as measured by standardized tests is rated highest. Virtually the same rating is given to the evaluations of administrators. Gaining almost the same high approval is an advanced degree, such as the master's or Ph.D. Evaluation by other teachers, length of teaching experience, students' evaluations, and parents' opinions have support, but not majority support.

The question:

This card lists possible criteria for giving additional pay to teachers for special merit. As I read off each one by letter, please tell me if you think it should or should not be used to determine which teachers should receive merit pay.

	Should Be Criterion %	Should Not Be Criterion %	No Opinion %
Academic achievement or improvement of students (as measured by standardized tests)	68	25	7
Administrators' evaluations	67	26	7
An advanced degree, such as a master's or Ph.D.	66	27	7
Evaluation by other teachers in the system	48	42	10
Length of teaching experience	48	47	5
Students' evaluations	45	47	8
Parents' opinions	36	55	9

Teaching as a Career

Although teaching as a career has lost favor steadily during the last 15 years, the results from this year's survey indicate that the downward trend may have ended. In 1969, 75% of parents said that they would like to see one of their children enter public school teaching as a career. In 1983 only 45% said this.

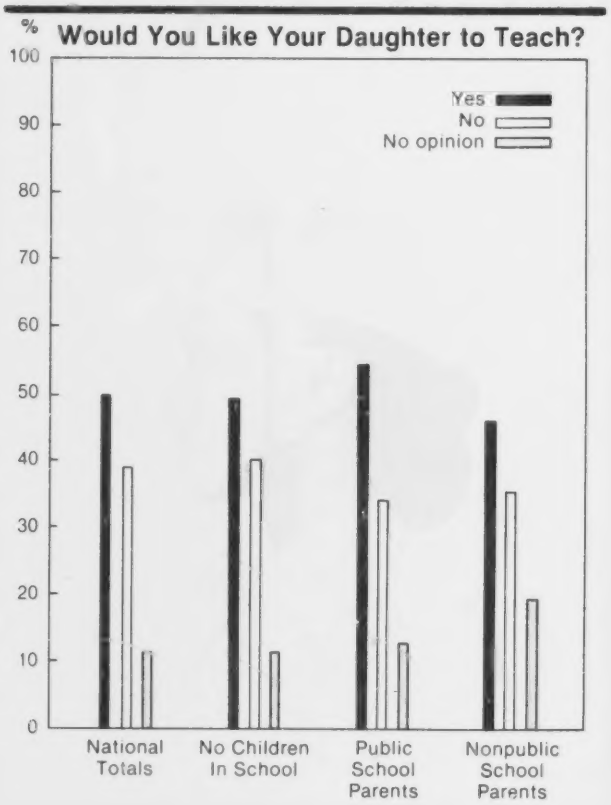
In the 1984 survey, the question differed from that asked in 1969 and 1983, which dealt with "a child of yours." The question this year asked respondents first if they would like a daughter to take up teaching as a career; the same question was then asked about a son.

Fully 50% of those interviewed said that they would like a daughter of theirs to take up teaching in the public schools as a career. Slightly fewer (46%) said that they would like a son of theirs to make a career of teaching.

The question:

Would you like to have a *daughter* of yours take up teaching in the public schools as a career?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes	50	49	54	46
No	39	40	34	35
No opinion	11	11	12	19



The question:

Would you like to have a *son* of yours take up teaching in the public schools as a career?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes	46	45	51	41
No	42	43	37	40
No opinion	12	12	12	19

	Daughter		Son	
NATIONAL TOTALS	1984 %	1981 %	1984 %	1981 %
Yes	50	46	46	43
No	39	44	42	47
Don't know	11	10	12	10

Prayer in the Public Schools

Prayer in the public schools is an issue that has been hotly debated in recent years. A majority of those interviewed in this year's survey favor a constitutional amendment that would allow school prayer. However, the least support for such an amendment is found among the best-educated citizens and among the youngest adult age group — and these two groups will play the greatest role in determining future trends in public attitudes.

The question:

Have you heard or read about a proposed Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would allow prayer in the public schools?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes	93	93	95	93
No	6	7	4	7
Not sure	1	*	1	-

*Less than one-half of 1%.

The question:

Do you favor or oppose this proposed Amendment?

Those Aware of Amendment	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	69	68	73	68
Oppose	24	25	21	21
Don't know	7	7	6	11

The question:

How strongly do you favor/oppose this Amendment — very strongly, fairly strongly, or not at all strongly?

Those Who Favor the Amendment	National Totals %
Very strongly	61
Fairly strongly	34
Not at all strongly	5
Can't say	*

Those Who Oppose the Amendment	National Totals %
Very strongly	49
Fairly strongly	38
Not at all strongly	12
Can't say	1

*Less than one-half of 1%.

Nongraded Schools

The idea that a student should be allowed to progress through the school system at his or her own speed and without regard to grade level wins majority support, though acceptance of this plan by the public is less than in earlier surveys.

The nongraded concept is more popular with better-educated citizens, with younger citizens, and with parents of children in nonpublic schools. It is most popular in the large cities and least popular in the small communities of the U.S.

The question:

Should a student be able to progress through the school system at his own speed and without regard to the usual grade level? This would mean that he might study seventh-grade math, but only fifth-grade English. Would you favor or oppose such a plan in the local schools?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Favor	54	51	58	63
Oppose	39	40	36	33
No opinion	7	9	6	4

NATIONAL TOTALS	1984 %	1980 %	1975 %	1972 %
Favor	54	62	64	71
Oppose	39	30	28	22
No opinion	7	8	8	7

Course Credit for Community Service

Widespread approval is found for a proposal to award course credit to high school juniors and seniors for community service, such as working in a hospital or recreation center, beautifying parks, or helping law enforcement officers.

This proposal was first included in this survey series in 1978. At that time, 87% said that they would like such a plan to be adopted in their own community. In this year's survey, 79% approve of this plan. However, the approval rating among parents of children now attending the public schools remains about the same (86%) as in the earlier survey.

Every group in the population gives a high approval rating to this proposal, which was strongly endorsed in Ernest Boyer's 1983 report, *High School*, an important study by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

The question:

A plan has been suggested to enable all juniors and seniors in high school to perform some kind of community service for course credit — such as working in a hospital or recreation center, beauti-

fying parks, or helping law enforcement officers. Would you like to have such a plan adopted in this community, or not?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Yes, would like plan	79	77	88	78
No, would not	16	17	12	16
No opinion	5	6	2	6

NATIONAL TOTALS	1984 %	1978 %
Yes, would like plan	79	87
No, would not	16	8
No opinion	5	5

PERENNIAL ISSUES

Major Problems Confronting the Public Schools in 1984

Although discipline continues to be cited most frequently by respondents as the top problem with which their local schools must contend, parents who now have children enrolled in the public schools mention this problem significantly less often than in 1983.

In the 1983 survey, 29% of the parents interviewed named "discipline" as the biggest problem of their schools; 23% mentioned discipline in this year's survey. Since parents of children now in school are likely to be best informed about discipline, their views must be given special credence.

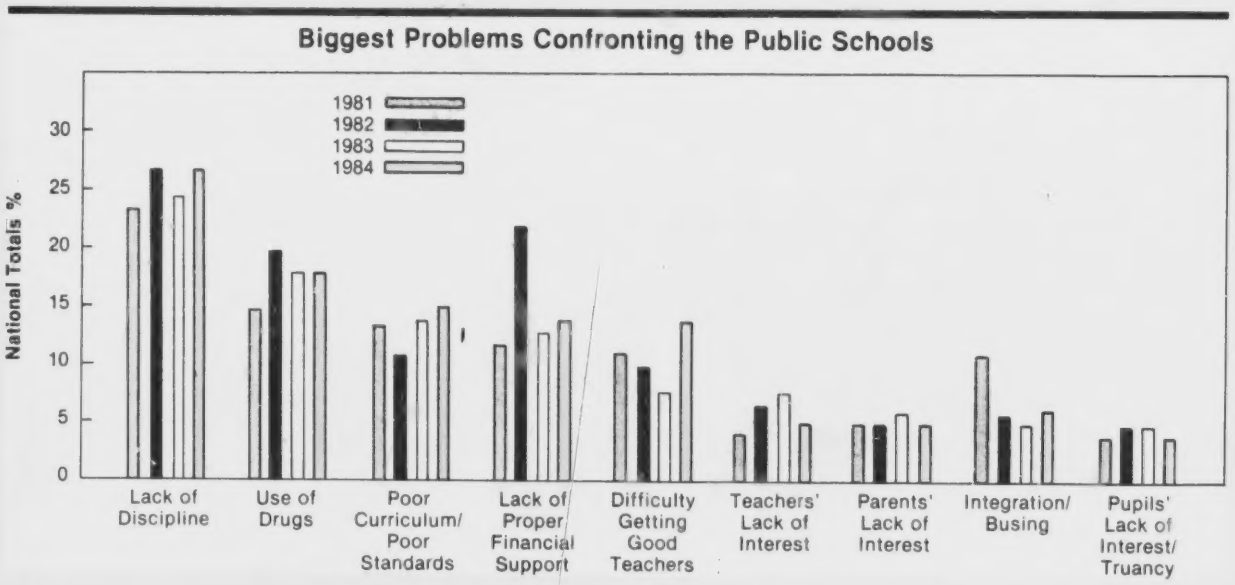
The top five problems found in the 1983 study are also the top five problems cited in 1984. Next to discipline, "use of drugs" and "poor curriculum/poor standards" are mentioned most often. Tied for fourth place are "lack of proper financial support" and "difficulty getting good teachers."

The question:

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the *public* schools in this community must deal?

	National Totals %	No Children in School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Lack of discipline	27	28	23	36
Use of drugs	18	18	20	10
Poor curriculum/poor standards	15	16	14	18
Lack of proper financial support	14	12	17	13
Difficulty getting good teachers	14	13	15	13
Integration/busing	6	7	3	4
Teachers' lack of interest	5	4	6	7
Parents' lack of interest	5	5	6	7
Low teacher salaries	4	3	6	5
Pupils' lack of interest/truancy	4	4	4	4
Drinking/alcoholism	4	3	5	5
Large schools/overcrowding	4	3	4	8
Lack of respect for teachers/other students	3	3	4	2
Problems with administration	3	3	2	4
Crime/vandalism	3	3	2	2
Mismanagement of funds	2	1	2	5
Lack of proper facilities	2	2	1	1
Moral standards	1	1	2	2
Teachers' strikes	1	1	1	2
Communication problems	1	1	2	1
Parental involvement with school activities	1	*	1	1
Lack of needed teachers	1	1	1	-
Fighting	1	*	2	-
Government interference	1	1	1	1
There are no problems	1	1	2	1
Miscellaneous	4	4	5	7
Don't know/no answer	10	12	4	5

(Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)
*Less than one-half of 1%.



The Public's Perceptions About Discipline

One way to measure attitudes regarding discipline is to ask respondents how serious a problem discipline is in their schools. Not surprisingly, those most closely connected with schools — the parents of students — hold different views from non-parents about discipline and about many other problems with which the local schools must deal. Thus 29% of parents with children enrolled in the public schools say that the discipline problem is "very serious." In answer to the same question, 36% of those who have no children in the public schools say that the discipline problem is "very serious."

The question:

How serious a problem would you say discipline is in the public schools in this community — very serious, fairly serious, not too serious, or not at all serious?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Very serious	34	36	29	32
Fairly serious	34	34	35	38
Not too serious	22	18	29	25
Not at all serious	4	3	6	3
No opinion	6	9	1	2

One of the perennial problems facing the public schools concerns public relations. The media are prone to limit their coverage of news of the schools to what journalists describe as "spot" news — happenings or events that take place in the schools. Unfortunately, these stories usually concern vandalism, drugs, absenteeism, theft of school property, attacks on teachers, and the like. "Good news" is difficult to find and to report.

Consequently, the public receives a distorted picture of schools and tends to regard them as blackboard jungles. Evidence of this comes from a question that asked respondents to estimate how often certain disciplinary problems occur in their local schools.

Analysis reveals that the perception of schools as blackboard jungles is likely to result from an exaggerated idea of the specific disciplinary problems that occur in a school system; this is certainly true when the perceptions of the public are compared with those of teachers, who are most likely to know the actual situation.

For example, as many of half of the respondents in this year's survey feel that drugs are used in their local schools "most of the time" or "fairly often." Similarly, about one-third of the public feel that theft of money or personal property, drinking of alcoholic beverages, theft of school property, and carrying of knives or other weapons occur "most of the time" or "fairly often."

The question:

As I read off the following problems by letter, would you tell me how often you think each problem occurs in the public schools in this community — just your impression?

NATIONAL TOTALS	Most of the Time or Fairly Often %	Not Very Often or Almost Never/ Never %	Don't Know %
Schoolwork and homework assignments not completed	64	23	13
Behavior that disrupts class	60	29	11
Skipping classes	56	31	13
Talking back to/disobeying teachers	56	32	12
Truancy/being absent from school	53	36	11
Use of drugs at school	53	33	14
Selling of drugs at school	47	37	16
Sloppy or inappropriate dress	47	42	11
Cheating on tests	46	38	16
Vandalizing of school property	39	49	12
Stealing money or personal property belonging to other students, teachers, or staff	38	46	16
Drinking alcoholic beverages at school	35	50	15
Theft of school property	34	51	15
Carrying of knives, firearms, or other weapons at school	29	55	16
Sexual activity at school	24	57	19
Racial fights between whites, blacks, Hispanics, or other minorities	22	64	14
Taking money or property by force, using weapons or threats	18	66	16
Physical attacks on teachers or staff	15	71	14

The Goals of Education

The goals of education are difficult to separate from the goals of life. It is equally difficult to separate the responsibility of the schools for reaching these goals from that of other institutions in American life.

Nevertheless, this year's survey attempted to obtain some evidence of how the public rates the importance of many suggested goals. The ratings given to the goals listed reveal a pragmatic people who view education primarily as a means to economic success rather than to intellectual development. Near the bottom of the list is the goal of appreciation of the arts and letters, learning as a lifetime program, and participation in the democratic process.

The goals are listed below on the basis of the number of respondents who gave a "10" (the highest rating) to the goal in question.

The question:

I am going to read a list of possible goals of education. I would like you to rate the importance of each goal on a scale of zero to 10. A zero means a goal is not at all important and should not be part of the public school program. A 10 means a goal is the most important goal — before all others. A rating between zero and 10 means you consider the goal to be somewhere in between in importance.

	Highest Rating			
	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
To develop the ability to speak and write correctly	68	65	74	71
To develop standards of what is "right" and "wrong"	64	63	68	61

	Highest Rating			
	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
To develop an understanding about different kinds of jobs and careers, including their requirements and rewards	56	54	60	54
To develop skills needed to get jobs for those not planning to go to college	54	52	59	61
To develop the ability to use mathematics for everyday problems	54	52	56	60
To encourage respect for law and order, for obeying the rules of society	52	52	54	53
To help students make realistic plans for what they will do after high school graduation	52	50	56	43
To develop the ability to live in a complex and changing world	51	50	57	42
To develop the desire to excel	51	49	56	51
To develop the ability to think — creatively, objectively, analytically	51	49	55	58
To help develop good work habits, the ability to organize one's thoughts, the ability to concentrate	48	46	52	42
To prepare for college those who plan to attend college	46	43	53	57
To develop the ability to deal with adult responsibilities and problems, i.e., sex, marriage, parenting, personal finances, alcohol and drug abuse	46	44	49	43
To gain an understanding of science and technology	45	43	50	51
To help students get good/high-paying jobs	45	43	51	43
To help students overcome personal problems	45	42	51	45
To develop the ability to understand and use computers	43	41	47	51
To develop the ability to get along with different kinds of people	42	42	43	40
To gain knowledge about the world of today and yesterday (history, geography, civics)	42	40	46	39
To encourage the desire to continue learning throughout one's life	41	40	45	39
To develop respect for and understanding of other races, religions, nations, and cultures	39	39	39	39
To develop an appreciation for and participation in the arts, music, literature, theater, etc.	35	33	39	37
To develop an understanding of democracy and to promote participation in the political process	33	32	35	32
To develop an appreciation of the "good" things in life	32	33	32	24
To promote physical development through sports programs	20	19	23	19

Who Should Determine the Curriculum?

If the public were given the right to decide who should have the greatest influence in deciding what is taught in the public schools, the top choices would be the local school board and parents; the public would give the state government and the federal government relatively little say in this matter.

This view is in sharp contrast to the policies followed in most nations, where the national government typically sets the curriculum.

The question:

In your opinion, who should have the *greatest* influence in deciding what is taught in the public schools here — the federal government, the state government, the local school board, local public school teachers, or parents of public school children?

	National Totals %	No Children In School %	Public School Parents %	Nonpublic School Parents %
Local school board	27	29	25	29
Parents	24	22	30	23
State government	17	18	14	16
Teachers	11	11	11	12
Federal government	9	9	9	4
Don't know	12	11	11	16

Deletions

The larger number of questions in this year's poll prevented us from publishing further breakdowns for many questions, as well as responses to one question regarding automatic promotion. (Asked if children should be promoted from grade to grade *only* if they can pass examinations, 71% said yes, 25% said no, and 4% expressed no opinion.)

How to Order Reprints

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In October Phi Delta Kappa will publish a 15-year (1969-1984) compilation of the Gallup polls on education. In this volume the poll questions are arranged topically rather than chronologically, making it easier to look up poll results on specific topics. *The Gallup Polls of Attitudes Toward Education, 1969-1984: A Topical Summary* can be ordered for $6 each ($5 for PDK members).

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